Project Description:

Previously a headquarters facility for a major pharmaceutical company, this 100+ acre site is now the home of a research-based science campus for Yale University. After developing the master plan, the landscape architect was charged with envisioning a new landscape framework for the ten-acre core of this campus, to better integrate its many buildings with a campus character more in harmony with a university setting.

The existing site was dominated by large open parking lots separating individual buildings, limited tree cover, awkward building-to-building pedestrian connections and a generally inhospitable user experience. The large extent of pavement and lack of tree cover increased the urban heat island effect and put undue pressure on the existing watershed. These conditions contributed to an uninviting setting for the University researchers, students and employees.

The main project goal was to provide a more unified approach to the landscape character with appropriately scaled, verdant walkways between buildings and outdoor spaces of varying scales intended to promote opportunities for collaboration amongst researchers.

The design team worked closely with the university to develop a new landscape aesthetic for the campus that connected the surrounding buildings in ways that they were not previously. This effectively changed the character of the existing exterior spaces from one that was corporate and vehicular focused to one that was collegiate, lush and pedestrian-friendly. Much needed new activity spaces were provided to promote outdoor gatherings and impromptu collaboration among members of the university community.
Overall Site Plan - Situated on top of a knoll, the project area consisted of five existing buildings. Pre-project conditions (inset) were dominated by parking with inadequate connections between buildings and insufficient outdoor spaces. The new design reduces impervious pavement by 24,000 sf. integrating the buildings and providing a more collegiate setting.
The majority of the west end of the site is over structure and was previously dominated by lawn and gravel roof ballast. The site was transformed by a new green roof and intensively planted woodland garden.
A simple arching tree-lined walk provides dynamic yet rational pedestrian circulation connecting all the project area buildings on campus. Disease-resistant elms were used as a means of linking West Campus to Yale’s Main Campus in New Haven, also known as the Elm City.
The pedestrian experience is enhanced and made more prominent by the appropriately-scaled, realigned walkways within a varied landscape.
The 20,000 sf Conference Center Plaza provides space for small and large gatherings providing new opportunities for collaboration between faculty, researchers and students.
Seating for 96 is provided under extra large sunshades and is the central space for weekly after hours barbecues. These elements can be removed to provide a flexible space for much larger gatherings.
Three distinct areas are provided in the Conference Center plaza. The sunshade area is flexible and suited for larger events. The pergola provides filtered shade and room for smaller groups. And finally, the cherry bosque has movable tables and chairs as well as sculptural seating under the canopy of trees.
The Conference Center plaza is defined by planted areas that enclose each space and provide a textural and colorful backdrop.
Energy efficient LED lights were used for pedestrian and vehicular areas. Accent lighting was discretely used in the Conference Center plaza for after hours events.
The monumental pergola structure helps define space in the Conference Center Plaza and provides a dynamic and ever-changing shadow pattern throughout the day. Personal charging stations are situated throughout the plaza for convenience.
Formerly a gravel ballast roof, the new green roof utilizes extensive planting to help reduce the urban heat island effect and blur the edge between landscape over roof and on-grade, while Corten planters provide the growing depth needed for small trees.
Originally dominated by lawn, the new woodland garden was regraded and planted with mainly native species to provide an intimate area that can be enjoyed by individuals and small groups during the spring and summer months.
One acre of previously manicured lawn has been transformed into a native meadow that increases biodiversity and attracts pollinators. Furthermore, it aids in stormwater management by slowing down runoff utilizing deep root systems of native grasses and wildflowers.
Colors and textures of materials were specifically selected to help unify the surrounding and disparate buildings. These included local granite quarried less than 10 miles from the project site used for the landscape curbs, steps and cheekwalls.